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ABSTRACT

The New Approaches to Lifelong Learning (NALL) project is a Canada-wide 5-year research initiative during which more than 70 academic and community members are working collaboratively within a framework of informal learning to address the following issues: informal computer-based learning, recognition of prior learning, informal learning in a variety of social locations, learning within marginalized or disadvantaged cultures, and learning about school-to-work transitions. The NALL project's primary objective is to identify major social barriers to integrating informal learning with formal/nonformal learning and certification and to support new program initiatives to overcome such barriers. The NALL project's focus is on the informal and nonformal learning practices of people involved with the Growing Jobs for Living Project (GJOBS) in the Quinte bioregion, located on the north shore of Lake Ontario in Canada. These learning practices are related to the principles and practices of environmental adult education, feminist adult education, and transformative learning. The global and ideational contexts of some of the major socio-environmental changes and problems that have affected the Quinte bioregion and been a catalyst for GJOBS were examined. The methods used to study the informal learning

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practices of GJOBS participants were reviewed. The major outcomes of the study were discussed from the standpoint of their relationship to the broader field of adult education. (Contains 25 references.) (MN)

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In Search of Social Movement Learning: The Growing Jobs for Living Project

Darlene E. Clover and Budd L. Hall

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In Search of Social Movement Learning: The Growing Jobs for Living Project

Introduction

What is a social movement?
It goes on one at a time
It starts when you care
To act, it starts when you do it again after they said no
It starts when you say we and know what you mean,
and each
Day you mean one more.

Marge Piercy, The Low Road

This document is a working paper that is being developed within the context of and for the OISE-based New Approaches to Lifelong Learning (NALL) research project.

In association with NALL, the Growing Jobs for Living Coalition (GJOBS) conducted a study of the 12 Steering Committee Members of the Community Shared Agriculture project (CSA), the largest project/outcome of GJOBS. The primary purpose of the research was to find out what informal learning activities members where involved in, how this learning helped them to strengthen the CSA project, and in particular, and how they understood the relation between their informal learning and the non-formal learning opportunities provided by the CSA process. The study also identified some of the major barriers to informal and nonformal learning.[1]

The purpose of this paper is to discuss the outcomes of this study of informal and nonformal learning in relation to the objectives and focus of NALL. It is a contribution to the ongoing debate of the importance of adult learning and activities, particularly in terms of what they can contribute to socio-environmental change in Canada. Perhaps the most important point which emerged from the study was that in terms of working towards socio-environmental change, the central aim of GJOBS/CSA, informal learning needs to be augmented by nonformal and collective processes of learning if community change is to come about.

The paper is organized into five sections. First we examine the objectives and broad framework of NALL in terms of what it is trying to accomplish. This is followed by a brief examination of some additional adult and nonformal streams of learning and education such as feminist adult education and

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environmental adult education which revolve within what we call a social movement learning framework and which have very much informed the work of our study.

Second, we provide an examination of the global and ideational contexts of some of the major socio-environmental changes and problems which have affected the Quinte Bioregion and been a catalyst for GJOBS.

Third, we outline the research methodology and methods used in the study we undertook on the informal learning practices of those involved in the GJOBS. We attempted to use the most participatory processes possible.

In the fourth section we examine some of the major outcomes of the study of informal and nonformal learning. Section Five discusses how these relate to the broader field of adult education and offers some ideas for future policy development.

Section One: NALL and Related Theoretical Contexts

NALL is a Canada-wide five year research initiative that includes more than 70 academic and community members attempting to work collaboratively within a framework of informal learning. It is comprised of six working groups whose foci range from developing a national survey to informal computer-based learning; from recognition of prior learning to informal learning in a diversity of social locations; and from learning within marginalized or disadvantaged cultures (women, aboriginal, rural, etc.) to learning about school-work transitions.

NALL frames informal learning as

> an activity involving the pursuit of understanding, knowledge or skills which occurs outside the curricula of institutions providing educational programmes, courses or curricula. It is distinguished from everyday percepts and general socialization by people's own conscious identification of the activity as significant learning. The basic terms of informal learning are determined by the individuals and groups who choose to engage in it, without the presence of an institutionally authorized instructor (NALL, 1999).

NALL's primary objective is to

> document current relations between informal learning and formal/nonformal learning and education, identify major social barriers to integrating informal learning with formal/ nonformal and certification, and support new program initiatives that promise to overcome such barriers.

Our focus is on the informal and nonformal learning practices of people involved with the Growing Jobs for Living Project (GJOBS) in the community of Quinte. In particular, we studied the informal/non-formal learning activities of the GJOBS Steering Committee members, those responsible for coordinating and giving guidance to the project as a whole.

Like Church et al (2000:5), we began by trying to limit our analysis to the initial Rolland Paulston (date?) and NALL informal, nonformal, formal trilogy. However, as time went on we found that the work seemed to be able to be understood through a variety of discourses which includes but in not limited to the discourse of informal learning. What has been most instructive about the involvement in NALL has been the degree to which we have been part of a variety of theoretical frameworks arising for debate and discussion. The work in Quinte has been a good forum for interrogating these varying discourses. It is important however to note that from the perspective of the authors of this paper, the most fundamental aspect of NALL support for the GJOBS process was that it recognized a community-based initiative as being capable of creating learning situations. As activist researchers, the most critical measure of our engagement in the GJOBS process has been in being useful from time to time in supporting the process of actually getting to the identification of "green" employment generation and environmental health education activities. As a participatory research project, results in the community for the group engaged in the activity were the first and foremost goals of our work.

A Rich Tradition

The NALL project based as it is on the Paulston, Knowles (1975), Tough (1978) foundations as revived and re-articulated by David Livingstone is part of the broader set of adult education theories. The GJOBS project is an expression of a local community-based social movement activity. GJOBS has been conceived within the social movement tradition of adult education. David Smith (1994), a socialist adult educator, has written of the three characteristics of education for political change. The first characteristic is that they have "always dealt with concrete social/economic issues." Second, there is a "strong link between study and action." The third characteristic is the "grounding in the constellation of values we label humanist" (Ibid.:69-70). Smith, working in 1940's rural Ontario and Saskatchewan in turn is articulating a tradition, which in fact, precedes him. R. H. Tawny (1964:88), when speaking at the 50th Anniversary of the English Worker's Education Association in 1953 noted that "All serious educational movements in England have also been social movements." The early Worker's Education Association aimed towards "making individual students, to awaken working-class movements as a whole to a keener consciousness" (Ibid.:90). Oscar Olsson (in Blid 1989:16), the Swedish so-called "Father" of the study circle movement, shared his own vision in 1911 of the heart of social movement learning. From a booklet entitled, The educational work of the people, comes the following expression,

> The understanding of the connection of one's own life's work, however small, however inconsiderable, with the great roaring life in the mighty passing of time, arouses an enthusiasm, which can bring about as great miracles as those of the fanatic, and which in a completely different way, guarantees a very fruitful result."

Environmental Adult Education

Clover, Follen and Hall (2000:22) note that "environmental adult education is about the fundamental transformation of human/Earth relations." It goes beyond simply 'greening' people's way of thinking. For we can reduce, reuse, recycle, use lead-free petrol and change technology but the reality is that dramatic and fundamental changes in the way we live and inter-act with each other and the rest of nature are required (Mikkelson 1992).

Through an inter-active, participatory group process of learning and teaching, environmental adult education stimulates a critical socio-political analysis of humanitys' response to itself and oppression such as humans over nature, men over women, whites over people of colour, etc.; encourages the re-connecting in a more sensory, spiritual and emotional way with the rest of nature in both urban and rural environments; examines the root causes of the environmental crisis (unequal power relations, capitalism, cultural imperialism, economic development, scientific frameworks, militarism, fear of change, etc.); makes links between environmental and other social issues and examines the ways in which our views and perceptions of nature have been culturally mediated; encourages and taps into people's ecological knowledge or ways of knowing; and uses people's own potential to solve problems and bring about social and political change (Clover et al 2000).

"Environmental adult education is environmental in two respects: the content and the methods and means of communication. It works to instil not only a sound intellectual and factual grasp of environmental issues but also their intimate connections to other socio-political issues, and to develop values and skills favouring democratic participation and decision-making" (Ibid.:23).

Feminist Adult Education

Feminist adult education brings a gender analysis to all forms of adult learning and demonstrates the ways in which this is essential to an integrated and more transformative approach. Gender does not refer to women alone but rather is a social construction of the place of men and women in society and the roles they are expected to play. Pietila and Vickers (1990:38) argue that:

> A focus on gender does not proceed merely from a concern with inequalities between men and women, but on the recognition of differences between men and women in relation to household division of labour, access to and control over production resources and assets,

and stakes and incentives.

A gender approach is an analysis of the roles of men and women in society. It provides a way of looking at the lives of both women and men in a particular society and considers the totality of social, economic, and political life in learning what the forces are that shape society in general and, in particular, inhibit women from becoming full partners with men in decisions which affect their lives. A gender analysis focuses on the relationship between women and men and society and nature, acknowledging that women generally have disadvantaged and subordinate positions that prevent their full participation as both decision-makers and full beneficiaries in the world in which they live. Moreover, it recognizes that men in general have access to the four very important areas of power: economic, political, cultural and educational. An approach adequate to women's needs requires not simply to make women visible and call for resources to be directed to women, but also an analysis of how male privilege and power over women can be reduced. The needs of women for resources of their own to discharge their household duties or practical needs, cannot be adequately met without some reduction of women's dependence on men and some move toward greater gender equality in control of resources and political needs. Thus, a gender approach does not neglect women's practical needs of home and family and focus only on women's strategic needs of access to resources and decision-making. Rather it begins from the immediate needs that women themselves express and analyses the interconnection between those needs and strategic gender needs. The needs of poor women for more resources of their own cannot be adequately campaigned for only in terms of demands for equality (Elson 1992).

Professor Shirley Walters of South Africa states that feminist adult education "has a strong political, mobilizing and empowering connotation" (see Ba 1993:9). There is a strong emphasis on supporting personal development while promoting political action to challenge oppressive structures. Feminist popular education begins with daily experiences of oppression as experienced by women in order to develop a politics that takes into account the multiplicity of oppression such as gender, race, capitalism, patriarchy, and relations to the rest of nature and challenges them (Viezzer 1986). Maria Mies (1983) concludes that women in general are more sensitized to the psychological mechanisms of dominance because they have experienced it throughout their lives and are therefore more in a position to assume an on-going dialectical process of learning about each individual's reality. By seeking to understand the multiplicity of oppression, feminist popular education works towards a broader understanding of social transformation and methods by which it can be achieved (Rosero 1986).

Feminist adult education draws attention to the fact that the global economic system is values driven, not neutral, that social and cultural traditions are values driven, and specifically, that gender relations are values driven.

Women working in critical education for social change have discovered that in order to guarantee women's participation in workshops, meetings, seminars, or environmental action projects, these events and learning sessions must be planned to incorporate the demands of women's daily lives. These include such elements as childcare and the inability to travel great distances to participate either due to heavy work commitments at home or the lack of funds for bus fare or access to other forms of transportation (Ba 1993).

Feminist adult education is both action and process-oriented. The method of arriving at a decision or understanding a particular issue is considered to be as important as the result. Any process begins from the knowledge base of women and men, involves a high degree of participation and comes from a basis of mutual respect (Walters and Manicom 1994). Freire believes that an atmosphere of mutual respect establishes a dialogue among equals (Freire 1972). The challenge for feminist adult educators has been to ensure that women's realities are given respect and voice. Effective means have been group consensus-building strategies that work openly and encourage active and full participation. These means are used not only ensure a process which is more likely to be fair, but also work to gain the maximum amount of support for any action which will be taken.

Transformative Learning

Transformative learning theory as taken up first by Jack Mezirow (1991) and later in a dramatically re-imagined way by Ed O'Sullivan and others has also influenced our thinking and reflection. The

Transformative Learning Centre in the Department of Adult Education, Community Development and Counseling Psychology in OISE/UT notes that

> Transformative Learning integrates broad areas of ecological study, feminist, anti-racist, aboriginal, popular education, post-colonial education and critical pedagogy. Transformative learning is respectful of all knowledges and provides a framework for deepening our understanding of the underlying forces which are transforming....the world" (TLC Brochure, 1999).

Transformative learning is an attempt to conceptualize an inclusive educational process which describes the practice by which individuals within their social locations join together with each other and others in order to take action. It aims to empower people to feel more confident and take a leading role in formulating strategies that challenge oppressive situations and structures. Therefore, it involves a high degree of participation, recognizes mutual learning, stresses the creation of new knowledge and is directed towards social, economic or other forms of justice and democracy. It draws on the entire range of learning processes which are the stock and trade of educators working in adult education, community-based literacy, popular education, environmental adult education and/or other social movement initiatives. Transformative learning is a label of convenience or an umbrella under which a variety of other concepts might find shelter. This type of learning can be a catalyst in working towards a global paradigm shift and redefining and reexamining values.[2]

Feminist Adult Education, Environmental Adult Education and Transformative Learning are based in the importance of personal transformation through active learning, but more particularly, they support collective learning or learning in solidarity. They are theories and practices of education which arise from and are framed by social movements; the knowledge, issues, contexts and ways of working, learning and educating found within these dynamic initiatives for socio-environmental change.

A social movement learning framework

The GJOBS project has been built therefore, on a theoretical and practical framework which includes feminist adult education, environmental adult education and transformative learning - what we refer to in GJOBS as a social movement learning framework. We have been drawn to explaining our background work in these terms because they seem to be more inclusive of the relational aspects of learning. They complement and in some ways go beyond at least the earlier expressions of informal self-directed learning. The concepts of informal, non-formal and formal education which offer the benefit of relative clarity of expression, are largely framed within the context of the structure of learning. Formal is the poetic phase found in each of the descriptions. Learning is understood primarily in relation to how it is structured, where it takes place, the presence or not of an instructor or facilitator and so forth. The concepts themselves are silent on context apart from educational or institutional structure. For a social movement action oriented community project a much richer palate is needed; a more complex set of questions and issues need to be grappled with. We fully acknowledge that the endless task of the scholar is to search after ever more accurate representations of the complex world we find ourselves in, and that social movement learning may also not serve our needs in the end, but it is the current iteration we are working with! A social movement learning framework includes and addresses informal, formal and non-formal aspects of learning. For us, it also needs to address at least the following factors:

- socio-environmental contexts (including race, gender, class)
- social organization of learning opportunities
- content of learning
- who teaches?
- how does learning come about?
- where does/can learning take place?

Section Two: Globalization, Environment and Health Problems in the Quinte Region

The term globalisation has become entrenched in the vocabulary and lives of many Canadians. For some, this process - or better said ideology - has been very fruitful. It has meant an opening up of world

markets in terms of a 'freer' form of trade. Freer trade means the ability to export commodities and services as well as ideas, beliefs and cultures without restraint. Globalization has made a few people very rich and some people better off. But the repercussions of globalization for the vast majority, and in particular for women, have not been good. Macroeconomic policies have failed to create full employment and fulfil needs. In fact, they have often resulted in technological displacement/unemployment, underemployment, environmental deterioration and the chipping away of culture and identity. The Quinte Region is a classic example or microcosm of these socio-economic and environmental problems.

The Quinte region is located on the north shore of Lake Ontario approximately 200 kilometers east of the city of Toronto. The main borders are Prince Edward country to the south, the town of Brighton to the west, the town of Napanee to the east and the town of Bancroft to the north. The largest urban centre is the town of Belleville which has a population of approximately 38,000. The total population for the Quinte region is approximately 90,000 of which approximately 60% live in urban areas. The Tyandonaga First Nations Reserve is located in the heart of the region.

As an area of relatively established industrial production dating back to the earliest European settlement of Ontario, the Quinte region has seen a sharp rise in unemployment as a result of plant and factory closures related to NAFTA and other globally related shifts. From 1991-1995, over 2500 jobs were lost in the Quinte region and many more are 'underemployed'. Slowly, more information based jobs have moved into the area. However, training for these positions is not available and therefore, although 'new jobs' are being created, those without the skills are overlooked. In addition, double digit unemployment can be considered a crisis as they are often accompanied by rising incidents of crime. For example, the GJOBS office has been broken into and lost all its 'donated' computers twice in less than one year.

Run-off from chemicalised factory farming practices is a major source of pollution in the Quinte area. Moreover, there are serious water quality problems from arsenic and other heavy metals seeping from abandoned mines in the area. Unfortunately for humans our health is inextricably linked to the health of the environment.

Physical illness related to environmental toxicity is a growing problem in Canada. Increasingly, we humans are exposed through the air we breathe, water we consume and the food we eat to harmful chemicals such as herbicides and pesticides and other toxic byproducts such as dioxins and furans. Kaptchuk and Croucher (1986) argue that the food we eat is killing us that more and more studies are showing direct food behaviour connections. A report prepared by the Ontario Task Force on the Primary Prevention of Cancer in 1995 documents a variety of studies that show probable links between chemicals, radiation and ill health. Although there are far fewer women employed in many of these polluting industries, it is they and children who are the most adversely affected by environmental toxins. For example, "cancers related to diet are estimated by some to be as high as 30 to 40 percent in men and 60 percent in women" (Anderson 1987:51). The growing incidence of the new phenomenon referred to as "environmental illness," or the breaking down of the immune system due to an overload of environmental contaminants, is particularly affecting the female population.

The Bay of Quinte was identified by the International Joint Commission for the Great Lakes as one of 43 areas of concern with severe environmental and water quality problems throughout the Great Lakes. A number of presentations have been made by professors from the University of Guelph and McGill University over the past year which make links between rising instances of breast cancer in the region and growing environmental problems.

The Quinte region is also falling victim to what has become known as the process of cultural homogenization. Numerous small businesses and shops in the centres of cities or towns have fallen victim to mass food marketing through the installation on once fertile farm land of superstores such as Walmart and Toys R US, and fast food outlets such as McDonalds and Kentucky Fried Chicken. This process erodes culture, imagination and memory. Without collective memory, people lose the creative ability to envision change. Although some urban areas in the Quinte region have managed through collective action to stave off this onslaught, the city of Belleville has fallen victim and within a few short years, has an almost derelict city centre.

But another side of this bioregion is that it is very beautiful. It is an area of lakes, streams, forests and rich agricultural land. There are also many committed groups and individuals who are debating and grappling with the socio-environmental problems in the area. People are beginning to question health problems and the take over by foreign businesses. There is a richness of activism and learning which is important to creating a more healthy and sustainable community for all. It is these learning efforts for change which this study examines.

Growing Jobs for Living

> I believe this community can solve its problems...The days of government providing these things are long gone. It's time to go back to the days when we did these things ourselves.
>
> Ross McDougall, The Intelligencer, Belleville, Ontario.

Against this backdrop, numerous community initiatives have been taking place across Canada and in the Quinte Region (for examples see Nozick 1992). So called 'green' or environmental community initiatives provide some of the best examples of how community change can come about. One of the main ingredients behind socio-environmental change is learning: how people learn not just about the issues and problems, but how to critically and constructively discuss and debate them, and then work collectively to define the future they want for their community and how they are going to get there. It is this process of learning and education that ensures active involvement, democratic decision-making and broader support for change. Growing Jobs for Living is grounded in the knowledge that authentic long-term solutions to pressing socio-environmental problems require this collective learning and teaching approach.

GJOBS is an umbrella project. Its primary goal is to use environmental adult education to help people to create a healthier more sustainable community. Increasingly, community education literature argues that it is the "educational activities" which are the most important as it is through these initiatives that community members will be better able to name issues and problems in the community, the ways in which these issues and problems are inter-woven and how and why they affect particular people in particular places at particular times (Fien 1993; Nozick 1992). A dying and unhealthy community affects everyone and therefore, should be everyone's concern which means involving the private sector, the pubic and the government on an equal footing.

The objectives of GJOBS are to provide an opportunity for people to come together and discuss important and broad issues such as human/ecosystem health, to help them to define and create alternative and more diversified 'green' livelihoods and localised goods and services thereby reducing dependency on large businesses, and to repair the environmental damages.

This project combines values and criteria of environmental sustainability with the needs in a specific community for economic restructuring. It uses activities such as study circles, workshops and participatory research. This is an important model for alternative job creation which might well be explored by other communities across Canada and around the world and therefore, the work is being broadly disseminated.

Community Shared Agriculture

The main project developed under GJOBS is the Community Shared Agriculture (CSA) project. The key objectives and activities of this project have been to:

1. Use the Internet and other local resource venues to investigate existing CSA projects across Canada and within the United States; what did they look like, how were they set up, what made them successes, what obstacles did they face, etc. This information has been disseminated to the participants of the CSA workshops and meetings which are now in the 100s. One of the GJOBS coordinators found a video which was shown to community members at one meeting.
2. To participate in conferences in Canada and US to get more information on CSA work. So far this has basically included the GJOBS coordinators but this opportunity should be extended to farmers and other members of CSA. These conferences provide an opportunity to learn more about some

of the debates around Genetically Modified Foods (an issue identified as extremely relevant by many members of the community through a personal and group questionnaire discussion process and we will come back to this)

3. To build urban/rural partnerships by identifying farmers who are into organic farming or are moving away from heavily chemicalised farming in the area and link them to people in the towns and villages who want to/can buy this produce. Through community meetings, consumers find out what farmers are growing, and influence their decisions on what to grow. They are also involved in the 'risk'. The consumer pays up-front at the beginning of the year on an amount agreed to by the CSA group for vegetables and fruits grown during the coming summer months. This way the grower is guaranteed not only expense money but also, labour expenditure. There is also a risk..for example, if there is a drought, the consumer shares the risk. One addition we hope to make to the CSA in the future is a storage area so the vegetables and fruits can be made available much longer, particularly the root vegetables such as parsnips, squash and turnips.
4. To provide an opportunity for employment for youth and students. There is an idea of young people appreciating 'country life'. Many young people are leaving the rural areas for the city because they feel there is no life there for them. It is important for the young people to see for themselves the knowledge and ideas generated by 'ordinary' people in their own community. This project is about helping to create opportunities for young people to be able to stay here and not move to the cities. Young people are employed on the farm by farmers or through Loyalist College placement programmes. They learn about organic farming, chemicals, environmental problems, marketing and local distribution and also the politics and economics of distribution.

Steering Committee

To develop and guide GJOBS, a Steering Committee has been put into place. This Committee consists of farmers, small business owners and workers, municipal politicians, university students and college professors, a bank manager, and non-governmental and community workers. It is the role of the Steering Committee to set the parameters of the project, assist with fundraising issues and coordinator/administration issues.

Issues such as environmental contamination and health, genetically modified foods, organic farming and notions of how to redefine work are complex and often overwhelming. In order to be better members on the Committee, people have had to engage in a number of informal and non-formal learning activities. The research conducted for NALL focused on identifying these learning activities and attempting to understand their importance to the process of socio-environmental change and the management of CSA.

Section Four: Research Methodology

In association with the OISE-based Network for New Approaches to Lifelong Learning (NALL), the Growing Jobs for Living Coalition (GJOBS) conducted a study of the Steering Committee members which also included the two GJOBS/CSA Coordinators. The primary purpose of the research was to find out what informal learning activities members where involved in, how this learning helped them to strengthen their role on the Steering Committee, further develop GJOBS/CSA, and in particular, and how they understood the relation between their informal learning and the non-formal learning opportunities provided by GJOBS/CSA. The study also identified some of the major barriers to informal and nonformal learning in the Quinte community. The research process was designed to collect quantitative and qualitative data.

GJOBS, to the best of its ability, was committed to using a research method which included the personal and collective participation of all the subjects of the study. The student researcher from OISE/UT, in collaboration with the one of the GJOBS Coordinators developed a draft questionnaire. The Steering Committee members were then contacted, provided with the draft and asked for their comments and input. The questionnaire included a number of questions which could provide a demographic profile of the members. This included age, income (both personal and family), level of schooling, urban or rural status, marital status, number of children (if any), and any hobbies or other recreational learning activities in which they had engaged in the past five years.

The primary questions developed to examine the informal learning activities of these members as they

related to GJOBS and CSA were:

1. The types of learning activities related to their participation in GJOBS/CSA in which people had engaged
2. How important they viewed their informal/nonformal learning activities to their participation as members of the Steering Committee
3. How they understood the relation between 'informal learning' and the nonformal educational/learning opportunities provided by GJOBS/CSA
4. What they felt were some of the barriers to informal and nonformal learning in their community
5. Two things they had learned as a result of their involvement on the Steering Committee and whether they saw this as 'informal' or 'nonformal' learning
6. The types of roles they could play in the future as a result of their informal and nonformal learning which would assist GJOBS to reach its goals

Personal interviews were conducted at the home of the GJOBS coordinator, at two participant's workplaces, and the office of GJOBS. The interviews were approximately one hour in length. These were followed by a two-hour focus group meeting held at the GJOBS office. The Steering Committee members suggested that the focus group session not be recorded mainly because the room was too large, had an echo and people did not want to have to 'artificially' lean into the microphone and thereby, hamper discussion. Therefore, one investigator was designated the role of note-taker.

The major questions outlined above were the only ones used. The primary purpose of the focus group was to provide an opportunity for Steering Committee members to share their ideas about informal and nonformal learning and its importance to their work. Since the fundamental or core element of GJOBS, which often separates it from other practices of 'community economic development' was the strong focus on the educational process, it was important for Steering Committee members to discuss this aspect in terms of their own participation. It was also felt that a focus group would add more ideas to what had been shared on the written questionnaire which was more or less a 'one-way' communication of question and answer rather than a dialogue.

In addition to this, the primary researcher, Darlene Clover, participated in a number of public forums and study circles and observed the interaction taking place between and amongst Steering Committee members and the community at large. Her observations are discussed below.

Section Five: Research Outcomes

Specific Learning Activities

In keeping with demands to better understand the complex issues and ideas which are the axis of GJOBS/CSA, all of the Steering Committee Members (SCM) took part in a variety of informal and non-formal learning activities. To clarify for the purposes of this paper, informal learning activities are most often individual learning activities, however, informal conversations are also seen as informal learning. Non-formal learning activities are organised, collective processes which have a specific purpose.

The majority (9) of the SCM had taken part in all the public forums organized by GJOBS/CSA as well as a number of the study circles. These forums can be seen as spaces of both informal and non-formal learning. They named these two activities as the most important sources of their learning. Information was shared at these meetings about GJOBS and CSA, but there was also time for open discussion. During these forums participants were able to debate issues such as organic farming and 'chemicalized' farming, the good-food box programme for low-income members, and some of the challenges of CSA such as gender and class (those who could afford the organic produce and those who could not).

Another source that four SCMs used to learn more about CSAs was the internet. Internet searches provided information on the quantity and variety of CSAs that exist. Many of the sites also made reference to learning materials, in particular, around genetically modified foods (GMF), chemical pesticides and fertilizers and human/ecosystem health.

The mass media, which it is interesting to note was kept separate from the internet by the participants, was also used but it was often noted that it was an unreliable or biased source of information. Approximately 90% of the members referred to the mass media only in terms of printed material. Very few SCMs referred to their 'formal' courses as assisting them with their work in CSAs.

Conferences were noted as another important sources of learning and in particular, those conferences that included more participatory workshops. Over the past year, 10 of the 13 members had participated in conferences in Ontario and one in Pennsylvania, USA. Academic conferences were not mentioned as relevant spaces of learning but it must be understood that this is not the world in which the vast majority of SCMs interact.

Four members actively sought out books which could help them to understand the issues.

An Additional Source of Learning

The environment or rest of nature and its ability to teach and be a site of learning has never been fully recognised by adult educators. However, the most interesting and engaging source or site of learning identified specifically by nine Steering Committee members, but re-affirmed by all during the focus group session, was daily lived experience and engagement with the rest of nature. The informal learning processes of gardening, engaging in organic farming practices, attempting to purchase local produce (which demonstrated how much produce arrived from abroad and the differences in prices), picking their own berries and apples, and so on provided some of the most invaluable learning opportunities. This experiential learning expanded their knowledge of the food they ate, environmental problems, social problems, and their relationship (or not) to the land. In the focus group one participant suggested that an invaluable learning opportunities would be for people who buy shares in CSA to come out and help work the land, pick the vegetables, and just 'be there with nature'.

Relationship between informal and nonformal learning

> The group learning activities will help us to preserve or revive [a] self-sufficient or co-dependent community.

It was noted time and again, particularly during the focus group meeting but also during the personal interviews, that although the informal learning was extremely important, it was the 'nonformal' education activities organized by GJOBS/CSA which were the most valuable sources of learning and contributed the most to personal and social transformation.

In particular, the members saw their 'informal' learning activities as an excellent way to find out more information about complex and controversial issues such as genetically modified foods. One Steering Committee member noted that her informal learning had helped her to "bring more information I found out about CSAs" to the group and another had found "a wonderful Canadian book on women and health which I can share with people." Another member had discovered "more about unhealthy food and its affect on my health" while another learned "more specific information about how CSA's function" and that "there is really little or no government support for CSAs in Canada." One member noted that he scans "the newspapers for information on genetically modified foods" and wants to ask "politicians why we have to follow [this] destructive model and not the European one. Why is Canada so stupid!"

As mentioned previously, a number of others had used the web as a source of education and learning. While one member noted that the web could "be a good learning source" she also felt that "talking with people in the community is better and helps me more on the Steering Committee". She noted that through direct engagement with others, "I have learned more about environmental problems and health - it is scary! and really makes me want to help this project continue." Another major problem with the internet was also expressed:

> I don't know if this is what you want, but the web sources on CSAs are mostly from the USA and we really need more Canadian examples. There seems to be a monopoly on information on the web.

Again as mentioned above, all of the members were in agreement that in terms of making concrete change in the community, it was the nonformal learning or organized activities by GJOBS/CSA which were the most valuable learning experiences. However, the amount of informal learning which takes place during nonformal activities should never be underestimated. One participant stated that through this process, she had discovered that the "experts in the community" are the farmers themselves. She also added that "there is a general lack of understanding of this and about organic farming in the general public that group learning helps to alleviate."

Two others noted that "this type of education [nonformal] is key to making real and lasting changes in the community" and that

> the coming together is more important because I can share what I know; the more people know they can do the more they do. The group learning activities will help us to preserve or revive self-sufficient or co-dependent community; people need access to more information and each other.

In addition, one SCM felt that "the group learning is better at building confidence and trust so CSA can work." Others suggested that the nonformal learning process could help to define and clarify "mis-information" which was being fed into the community. Another felt that "people's values, beliefs, behaviours and the way they view things can only be challenged in this type of learning - sometimes learning alone can do this, but it is more effective in a group."

The nonformal learning activities provided the opportunity to share what one had learned, and to test people's ideas and assumptions on the larger group. It provided a place to develop new collective knowledge and identify new ideas for CSA and GJOBS development. Bringing together the ideas and knowledge people had acquired around GMF and environmental illnesses was the most powerful process of engagement, challenge and possibility

Thoughts on the Nonformal Learning Process

> [These] conversations brought together all our learning and knowledge. The enthusiasm was contagious!
>
> GJOBS Steering Committee
> Member

Participants outlined a diversity of things they had learned as a result of their participation on the SC. Again, the majority of these were identified as having been learned through the nonformal process. Of particular interest was the fact that so many mentioned that they had learned that there were many people in the community interested in seeing positive change happen and willing to get involved. As one participant put it, "I have learned through this process that not everyone is driven by the consumer society." What they required was the space, which GJOBS/CSA provides, to be able to become involved.

Another participant touched on the idea of class in an unusual way:

> I come from outside Canada and Canada was to me always associated with wealth but the wealthy and the well-off and educated are not healthy because the food is not healthy.

What people like most about the nonformal learning activities was that they were friendly yet lively, challenging and informative to "make me want to learn more." Others noted that this process is allowing us to "create future possibilities together and have fun." Another felt that it was an "effective learning approach [that] maximizes participation."

Barriers to Informal and Nonformal Learning

David Livingstone (1999:50) argues that informal learning in the visible educational pyramid is "usually ignored, unrecognized, or taken for granted as simply day-to-day getting along." So too is much collective nonformal learning. A key barrier identified by one Steering Committee members and

confirmed by the others during the group discussion was:

> There is no support for political group learning. There is no money for these things to pay for childcare so women can participate - you can learn things on your own if you have the time, but not together and it is the together that makes communities more healthy.

There is a major deficiency in support for critically focussed socio-environmental nonformal group learning activities in communities. Nor is there as much recognition as there should be of the important role they can play and are playing in bringing about community change. Although not without their difficulties, nonformal learning activities provide learning opportunities for people who do not or will not engaged in learning in formalized pedagogical institutions (which were not mentioned as being a useful source of learning vis-a-vis CSAs in the study anyway) but who have a 'right' to learn and want to use their knowledge to help make change in their communities. Within GJOBS, the Steering Committee members themselves are making the links between their informal learning and the nonformal learning activities, and appreciating the value of nonformal group learning processes in creating new knowledge and ways forward.

Three other barriers identified were attitudes, economic systems and marketing, and poverty. In terms of attitudes, as one person noted "you hear some people say we ate DDT on our food all our lives and nothing happened to us!" Other people can buy into this and not bother to look further or study the debates. Another participant noted that it is not easy to get information about "unhealthy food and its link to human health in this community or Canada as a whole." We are unaware of what in is our food and often even where our food comes from. A number of participants cited poverty as one of the main obstacles. One participant, a single mother, suggested that often "people don't have the time or money to pursue learning". They cannot get involved in these types of activities because there is no childcare and no support. In addition, another noted "I am concerned that although the rich can afford healthy food, we have a large un- and under-employed population in this area which cannot. I really want to bring them on-side without penalising them." There is a need within CSA in particular to equalise the situation and make it just and fair. "We do not want to continue to 'victimise' people through this project."

Learning Activities for the Future

As a result of their involvement in learning activities within and for GJOBS/CSA all of the members felt they could take on a number of new and challenging roles. Four members noted that they would be willing to begin organizing the monthly meetings. Four members felt they could find guest speakers who could come in. Three felt they would be able to take on more of a 'public relations' role while eight felt they could facilitate a workshop or study circle on a specific top. Six of the members noted that they would now actively take part on a panel about CSA, organic farming and some of the major issues in their communties. Four members felt they would be able to design a research project while others felt they could "keep their eye on the media for interesting articles", "gather media stories for discussion" and "help to develop a clearing house for information,"

Challenges and Learnings as Part of NALL

The idea of GJOBS was to consciously use a 'participatory research' approach. For one member this excluded the use of a survey or questionnaire. No matter how well intentioned, interviews create an 'object' of study which is the interviewee. One member was extremely opposed to using this research method and remained highly critical until the end. She felt much better about the group process. She, as well as various others, was unclear as to the reason why we were disconnecting informal and nonformal learning and what that could possibly bring to the project. However, the results of the research have identified a number of key learning activities and ideas which are extremely useful to the project.

Participating in this study enabled Steering Committee members, for the first time, to reflect upon the amount of knowledge they were acquiring through informal learning and what it was contributing to the nonformal learning work. They were also able to articulate the relationship they saw between the informal or self-directed learning and the nonformal learning activities in which they engaged.

Towards Social Movement Learning Theory

Our work focussing on informal and nonformal learning within the GJOBS project has given us some insights which are valuable as a contribution to a wider theory of social movement learning and how this can contribute to NALL's objectives. The conversations about learning with the participants demonstrate that in the context of political, environmental and social change it is the combination of nonformal and informal learning which can most effectively support action for change at the community policy or market levels. For activists and community organization and groups concerned with planning for intentional learning within a social movement context, sensitivity to how and where the learning takes place is critical. That adults are capable of learning both on their own and with others is not something new. Reflections on gender relations within the GJOBS project, the quite unique relationship of the rest of nature to learning and action and the relationship of local political and market forces raised briefly in this paper will be explored further in future research and writing work.

We would benefit from interaction with some of the other NALL groups which are interested in aspects of social movement learning and aboriginal projects dealing with the land.

Notes

1. Nonformal learning in the adult education, and as it is understood in the GJOBS study, refers to organized learning activities which do not bestow any 'academic' credentials (i.e. diploma, degree, certificate of training, etc.) on the participant.

2. This definition comes for the working paper "Transformative Education" by Hall and Sullivan for the "Transformative Learning Through Environmental Action" IDRC funded-research project, 1993-1994.

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